

MR. PHILIP CRUSIUS

CHAIRMAN JAMES: Mr. Philip Crusius.

MR. CRUSIUS: Thank you, Madam Chairman and members of the Commission. My name is Phil Crusius. I'm from Arlington Heights, a suburb and village northwest of Chicago. Concerned Citizens for Self-Determination is a volunteer group that came together about five years ago, amid rumors of a casino coming to the local race track, Arlington International Race Course. It wasn't long until Richard Duchisossois, the track owner, was featured on the front page of the Daily Herald for ten days in a row carrying threats of shutting down the track if a casino was not built, alongside where stories of economic collapse of the village should the race track ever close.

Our Village Board took the side of the track. The citizens fought back with a petition. At the 4th of July parade in 1994 a dozen of us collected 1,000 signatures in less than an hour along the parade route. People chased after us to sign. Before long, 100 volunteers had gathered 6,000 names, 50 percent more than was needed to put a question on the ballot.

Two former local politicians took our petition to Court, all the way to the Illinois Appellate Court. They even subpoenaed grandmothers and grilled them on the stand. After intervention by the Village Board we finally had an advisory referendum on the ballot in April of 1995.

Over 150 local citizens volunteered for our campaign. The race track out-spent us 20 to one. Their telephone pollsters canvassed every voter three times. They mailed a dozen slick brochures to each resident. They even held a cocktail party at

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1 the race track for the official election judges, something the
2 Chicago Sun-Times said even the Mayor of Chicago wouldn't have
3 tried.

4 In spite of the track spending almost a quarter
5 million dollars for the best election money could buy, the vote
6 was a dead heat with only 38 votes out of 20,000 separating the
7 two sides. In 1997 we settled the issue the American way. After
8 a low key campaign, our citizens overwhelmingly elected a new
9 Village Board, adamantly and passionately opposed to casino
10 gambling. Two incumbents in favor of a casino came in last. The
11 politicians in our area now respect the community on the issue of
12 gambling.

13 The debate is over in Arlington Heights; the citizens
14 won. But something is very wrong when Court fights, petition
15 drives, referendums and intense volunteer efforts are required
16 just to maintain our community standards. Something needs fixing
17 when potential casino owners can use their significant financial
18 resources and clout to try to bully their way into town at the
19 expense of the citizens.

20 Recently the race track made a business decision to
21 stop racing and seek alternate uses of the facility. We wish
22 them well but even without gambling, Arlington Heights continues
23 to thrive economically and continues to be a wonderful place to
24 run a business and raise a family. Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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